

GWS 103: Gender, Women, Bodies, and Health (Honors)

University of Wisconsin-Madison

Spring 2022

MW 2:30 – 3:45

Sterling 1335

Professor Kelly Marie Ward (*she/her*)

kmward4@wisc.edu

Drop-in in person office hours: Mondays 12 – 1pm

Zoom office hours: Wednesdays 9:30am – 10:30am by appointment

(<https://kmward4.youcanbook.me>)

This course and all our activities at the University and surrounding city occur in Teejop, a place that was forcibly taken from the Ho-Chunk people. Despite decades of genocidal violence and forced displacement, the Ho-Chunk have always returned with a sustained presence and connection to their ancestral and sacred lands and waters. Our presence here is part of the continued occupation of Teejop, and so the knowledge we co-create in this space should reflect our desire to examine our positions within systems of power, privilege, liberation, and oppression.

The syllabus for this course is based on decades of contributions from various professors, lecturers, and teaching assistants in Gender and Women's Studies. This particular version was adopted with permission from Dr. Annie Menzel. I extend many thanks to all those who have contributed to the structure and content of this course.

Course Description

GWS 103 has been taught continually since 1978 and is—as far as we know—the nation's largest and longest-running feminist health course. This course examines both physiological and social processes relating to gender and health across the lifespan among cisgender, transgender, and non-binary individuals. Examples of topics to be explored include hormonal processes, reproductive anatomy & physiology, sexuality, sexual pleasure, chronic illness, depression, and sexual violence. A primary course objective is for students to connect information about their bodies and personal health to larger social and political contexts in order to critically examine their intersections. In particular, **this course will consider how gender-based oppression, in its intersections with racism, colonization, ableism, environmental destruction, economic exploitation, and other structures of violence and oppression, shapes bodies, health, and health disparities.** Conversely, it also emphasizes the ways that gender, bodies, and health

have been at the center of struggles for a more just and livable world.

Course Learning Objectives

After completing this course, you should be able to:

- Understand and describe physiological processes and phenomena relating to health (for example, menstruation, sexuality) and ill health (for example, cancer, chronic disease).
 - Recognize that bodies are located in a social context that influences health and illness.
 - Understand and analyze the interplay between physiological processes and social processes
 - Contextualize health within the social and cultural influences on people's lives
 - Evaluate how multiple kinds of structural injustices (e.g., racism, colonialism, classism, ableism, xenophobia, heterosexism, cis-sexism) shape health and health inequities.
- Demonstrate knowledge of health movements, especially Reproductive Justice
- Describe how gender affects the roles we play as health-care consumers, activists, and practitioners.
- Become more informed and active participants in health care—our own and that of our families and/or our communities

Course Information

- 3 credits
- Natural Science
- No Prerequisite, elementary level, course designation “N”
- In-person lectures and sections
- Credit hours earned by traditional [Carnegie definition](#)
- [Canvas URL](#)

COVID INFORMATION

As we return to the classroom, the COVID-19 pandemic continues.

All students and personnel on campus are required to wear a mask indoors. If you do not have a mask, we will provide one. Unmasked students who do not have a university-approved exemption will be asked to leave the classroom.

Please keep me informed about your health, and I will do my best to keep you informed about university policies. For the most updated information, consult the following website for current campus health and safety guidance:

covidresponse.wisc.edu.

COURSE MATERIALS

Most course materials (readings, videos, audio) are on Canvas under the relevant module. We will read a book later in the semester, more information about this will be provided week 2.

ASSIGNMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

All submissions are due by 11:59 pm on the due date.

Participation and Attendance- 20% of final grade

This portion of your grade is based on your attendance and active participation.

Attendance

Attendance is required. However, given the complexities of life, especially in this moment, **the lowest three participation grades, including zeroes for absences, will be dropped.**

Participation Criteria

I recognize that, for a variety of reasons--from individual to cultural to institutional and structural--people have different styles and approaches in participating and engaging with peers. In my courses I center a model of engagement that does not equate participation with loudness or frequency of talking.

Therefore, our assessment of participation will take into account a broad set of criteria, including the following:

- Thoughtfulness of verbal involvement in discussion.
- Active, engaged listening
- Non-domination of discussion
- Quality of participation in collaborative written elements of discussion (chat function, google docs)
- Quality of engagement with individual written elements (prompted reflections, thematic free-write, etc)
- Analysis and synthesis of course material
- Creative approaches/questions that take the class further
- Responsiveness to other students' contributions
- Respectful disagreement and critique

I value the thoughts and perspectives that each student brings. If something is preventing you from engaging in section discussions, please let me know ASAP.

Module Quizzes- 30% of final grade

For most weeks, a short quiz covering the material will open on Wednesday at 12 am, and be due on Saturday at 11:59 pm.

Reflections- 30% of final grade

There will be three written reflections, each worth 10% of your grade.

Book Review and Author Interviews - 20% of final grade

You will read a book, write a synopsis and draft questions for an interview with the author. This will be a group project but students will have individual roles on which they are assessed. More information will be provided about this assignment.

GRADING

Final letter grades are as follows:

A 93-100 **AB** 88-92 **B** 83-87 **BC** 78-82 **C** 70-77 **D** 60-69 **F** below 60

Typical Weekly Course Rhythm

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Lecture		2:30 – 3:45		2:30 – 3:45			
Read/watch /listen to readings, videos, podcasts, and other module materials	Module materials published						
Quiz				Quiz published 12 am			Quiz due by 11:59 pm

CLASS POLICIES

Communication/questions

You are welcome to make an appointment during my **virtual office hours**, Wednesday 9:30 – 10:30am <https://kmward4.youcanbook.me>. If you are unable to meet during this time, please email me and we can find another time. I also hold **drop-in office hours in person** on Mondays 12 – 1pm in Sterling Hall, room 3410.

I will do our best to answer emails within 24 hours, but I will not respond to class-related emails after 5 pm on weekdays or on weekends. If you have a technical issue (e.g. you cannot submit a quiz on a Saturday afternoon or a weekday late night), please take a screenshot documenting the issue and write me an email documenting the problem. I will respond as soon as possible on the following weekday. Please don't stress!

Late assignment policy

I know that life happens, and that pandemic life presents serious new challenges. PLEASE let us know if you have extenuating circumstances that prevent your completing an assignment or quiz, such as illness or family emergency, and I will work with you. It is your responsibility to communicate with me as soon as possible if something comes up. Communicating **before** the deadline is best but I understand this may not always be possible.

Assignments submitted to Canvas after the specified due date and time **without previous discussion with the instructor** will be deducted ten percentage points (10%). **Assignments submitted after 24 hours will not be graded.**

Religious Holidays

Absences due to religious holidays will not be penalized. Please let me know in advance if you will be missing class due to a religious observance.

Statement on self- and community-care related to course content

I will cover some intellectually and emotionally challenging topics in this class. I will make an effort to give a heads up about intense content, but it is not possible for us to anticipate the potential needs of all students. If you have concerns about your ability to participate in a particular course topic, please notify me in advance so that you can discuss other possible arrangements. However, please honestly assess your readiness to participate in this course and its content this semester. Your continued enrollment in this course indicates that you have read this syllabus, including this statement, and agree to participate in the course in a thoughtful and respectful manner.

Reproductive Justice and our learning and discussion practices

In this class, we center reproductive justice (RJ). [Leading RJ organization SisterSong](#) "defines Reproductive Justice as the human right to maintain personal bodily autonomy, have children, not have children, and parent the children we have in safe and sustainable communities." RJ is a human-rights-based framework, analysis, and movement rooted in Black feminism and Black women's and peoples' struggles for

reproductive freedom; it names a struggle long waged by Indigenous women, women of color, and trans* people; and it calls for coalition across issues and identities. We also look to Indigenous feminist, trans feminist, abolitionist, disability justice, environmental justice, and other justice-centered analyses and movements in their many interconnections with RJ, and in their work to create a livable future.

SisterSong writes that “To achieve Reproductive Justice, we must...

- Analyze power systems. Reproductive politics in the US is based on gendered, sexualized, and racialized acts of dominance that occur on a daily basis. RJ works to understand and eradicate these nuanced dynamics.
- Address intersecting oppressions. Audre Lorde said, “There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.” Marginalized women face multiple oppressions and we can only win freedom by addressing how they impact one another.
- Center the most marginalized. Our society will not be free until the most vulnerable people are able to access the resources and full human rights to live self-determined lives without fear, discrimination, or retaliation.
- Join together across issues and identities...RJ is both an opportunity and a call to come together as one movement with the power to win freedom for all oppressed people.

In lecture we practice centering these principles with respect to each topic that we study together. Among other things, they offer a set of important questions to ask ourselves and each other. How are intersecting systems of power at work in shaping the phenomenon that we are studying? Who is most vulnerable to the harms or most marginalized in this situation? What are their visions for freedom and access to the resources they need and the realization of their human rights? And how might each of us, with our particular combinations of privileges and vulnerabilities, histories and identities, support those visions, access, and rights, toward freedom for all oppressed people?

I approach the classroom as a place where people can take risks, make mistakes, and hear one another's perspectives—even as we are attentive to the ways that systems of power and oppression shape our perspectives and experiences in different ways.

COURSE EVALUATIONS

I will do my best to make this course enriching and an opportunity to learn and grow together. I value your feedback, and I strongly encourage you to participate in the course evaluation.

UW-Madison now uses an online course evaluation survey tool, [AEFIS](#). In most instances, you will receive an official email two weeks prior to the end of the semester when your course evaluation is available. You will receive a link to log into the course evaluation with your NetID where you can complete the evaluation and submit it anonymously.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Do I need to check Canvas often? Absolutely. Canvas is where all of the course materials are located! Canvas will also list all grades and allow you to turn in assignments.

Should I complete the modules before section? Please do your best to do so. Sections will revolve around discussion of the course lectures readings and other assigned materials.

CITATION AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

When we cite the work of others, we are offering gratitude. We are honoring the fact that they have made our own work, understandings, and analyses possible. We are acknowledging the profound gift of others' words and actions. Especially in a class where we center Reproductive Justice and its roots in Black feminism and Black women's health organizing, it is important to [#CiteBlackWomen](#) (campaign initiated by Dr. Christen A. Smith in 2017, now a collective, a praxis and set of principles, a podcast, and much more). In our citation practices we also honor the teachings of Indigenous Feminisms, Woman of Color and Queer of Color Feminisms, and Trans Feminisms, disability justice leaders, and other key visionaries.

Academic dishonesty is also a serious violation in the eyes of the university: it undermines trust and honesty, degrades the value of your degree, and defrauds those who may eventually depend upon your knowledge and integrity. Examples of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to: cheating on an exam or quiz, copying the work of someone else, submitting for credit work done by someone else, stealing exams or course materials, tampering with the grade records, or knowingly and intentionally assisting another student in any of the above.

Learn what constitutes plagiarism and the correct rules for citing sources. Refer to the Dean of Students' webpage for more information:
<https://www.students.wisc.edu/doso/>.

This course follows the policies and potential sanctions outlined by the UW Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards:

<https://conduct.students.wisc.edu/academic-misconduct-sanctions/>.

ACCOMMODATION POLICY

I am committed to making sure my courses are accessible to students with a range of disability accommodations and learning needs. If you have a McBurney Faculty Notification Letter (VISA), please check in with me make sure I have received it by week 2 of class. If you do not have a Faculty Notification Letter (VISA) but there are conditions or life circumstances that interfere with your ability to fulfill your responsibilities for this course, I encourage you to meet with me ASAP to discuss how best to accommodate you. In some cases, I may recommend that you consult with the McBurney Disability Resource Center: <https://mcburney.wisc.edu/>.

SCHEDULE

Consult Canvas for the most updated course schedule information. The Course Summary contains a listing of all assignments in the course. Modules, Assignments, and Grades in Canvas are also useful in keeping up to date on course activities.

Below is a course schedule giving you a brief idea of content for reference. This schedule **should be considered a living document that the instructor may change at any time if the need arises, although you will be made aware. Unless otherwise noted, all assignments are due at 11:59 PM CST.**

Module	Topics	Assignments
Module 0 Jan 24 - 28	Course introduction and syllabus; first week of section meetings	Orientation Quiz
Module 1 Jan 31 – Feb 4	Context, Histories, and the Reproductive Justice framework	Module 1 Quiz

Module 9 Apr 4 – Apr 8	Body Size, Stigma, and Health	Module 9
Module 10 Apr 11 – 15	Pregnancy, Birth, Lactation, and Birth Justice	Module 10 Book Synopses
Module 11 Apr 18 – 22	Contraception & Abortion	Module 11 Interview Questions
Author Interviews Apr 25 – 29		Interview Reflection 1
Author Interviews May 2 – 6		Interview Reflection 2
Final's Week		No Exam!

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

By virtue of enrollment, each student agrees to uphold the high academic standards of the University of Wisconsin-Madison; academic misconduct is behavior that negatively impacts the integrity of the institution. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and helping others commit these previously listed acts are examples of misconduct which may result in disciplinary action. Examples of disciplinary action include, but is not limited to, failure on the assignment/course, written reprimand, disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform faculty of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. Faculty will work either directly with you or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA.

[Apply for Accommodations](#)

Phone: (608) 263-2741

Email: mcburney@studentlife.wisc.edu

Text: (608) 225-7956

Fax: (608) 265-2998

ACCEPTABLE USE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY RESOURCES

Please review the policy regarding the [acceptable use of IT resources](#) by authorized users.

NETIQUETTE GUIDELINES

Please review the University's [set of rules for online behavior](#), including when learning in an online environment.